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GUIDANCE ON RESTARTING COMPETITIVE GRASSROOTS RUGBY



England
Rugby

Guidance on restarting
competitive grassroots rugby

SEPTEMBER 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Following Government approval for the return to competitive grassroots rugby, this document provides guidance for players, clubs, coaches, match officials, volunteers, first aiders and spectators taking part in both adult and age grade rugby.

Details of the current stage reached can be viewed on the [RFU's Return to Community Rugby Roadmap](#)

The RFU continues to take a phased approach to enable a safe return to grassroots rugby training and match play. Dependent on local government lockdown restrictions, some clubs may choose or be required to operate under different stages on the roadmap.

[Guidance for key elements in the stages is available here](#)

Each stage allows for different types of activity to be carried out. Stages A and B focus on individual skills, whilst C and D offer non-contact rugby in the form of [Touch Rugby](#) and [Ready4Rugby](#) a new format of the game aimed at supporting players to return to contact rugby when permitted. Stages E and F will focus on a return to the contact game.

The guidance in this document is specific to outdoor training only. For information on indoor activity, please refer to the [Government's latest advice](#)

Those with underlying health conditions, who may be at greater risk from Covid-19, should consider the transmission risk in group activity and decide whether to return to rugby. There is no pressure for anyone to come back to training, playing, coaching or match officiating.

The UK Government social distancing guidance should be adhered to where applicable. All attendees must abide by social distancing measures, except during permitted training activity and matches, keeping a 2m distance between themselves and others where reasonably practical in and out of the sporting environment. Social distancing guidance for England can be found [here](#).

It is expected that clubs will draw up their own detailed protocols of behaviour in line with the RFU's [core values](#) and guidance detailed below in order to maintain the integrity of our sport and ensure Covid-19 adaptations are adhered to.

This document refers to current UK Government guidance for England only and is subject to change in line with current Covid-19 Alert Level, any local government lockdown restrictions that may be implemented and additional or updated UK Government guidance.

BEFORE RUGBY ACTIVITY



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PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK & GENERAL HYGIENE

ACTION	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
Clubs should ensure all participants (and parents/guardians) are aware of good personal hygiene before, during and after activity . No one should feel pressured to return to training, playing, coaching or match officiating until they feel comfortable to do so. It should be made clear to participants that it is their own (or where applicable their parents/guardians) decision to opt in to participate in rugby activity.			✓					
Before every training session and/or match, clubs should have a process in place to confirm and record that participants and parents have undertaken a self-assessment. Ideally this should be completed prior to arrival at the venue to prevent participants with symptoms coming into contact with other participants, for example an online self-declaration form.			✓					
Clubs should share changes to club operations , provide clear signage and communicate regularly with all participants and parents, including making them aware/reminding them of any increased risk associated with taking part in activity and/or additional changes to previous normal practice. Clubs should also strongly advise participants to comply with public health restrictions and avoid high risk behaviour outside of the rugby setting to reduce the risk to other participants.			✓					



ARRIVAL AT VENUES

The RFU reopening facilities guidance provides information on measures and procedures that clubs should have in place ready for the arrival of participants and others at the venue. This includes the use of car parks, pitches, changing rooms and toilets and is aligned to the latest Government guidance.		✓			
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NUMBERS ONSITE

<p>Clubs should complete an RFU Covid-19 risk assessment to help them determine the number of people allowed onsite at any one time. The actual number allowed will vary from club to club as it will be dependent on the size of each facility and the number of pitches.</p> <p>As a guide, visitors should be able to remain socially distanced following standard government guidelines at all times. The only exception will be on the field of play where there can be no more than 20 members in a training group on each half of a pitch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs may want to consider staggering training sessions to accommodate numbers onsite and reduce the risk of transmission. • Clubs can use the RFU reopening facilities guidance to support this process and should also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Available car parking space ◦ Available access to toilet facilities ◦ Availability of hand washing facilities and/or sanitising stations ◦ Any restrictions to access points or throughways ◦ The impact on capacity of groups from the same household versus individual visitors 		✓			
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COVID-19 SELF-ASSESSMENT

ACTION	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
<p>Prior to attending training and matches, all players, officials, volunteers and spectators should undergo a self-assessment for any Covid-19 symptoms.</p> <p>No-one should leave home to participate in any type of rugby activity if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following Covid-19 symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A high temperature ■ A new, continuous cough ■ A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Should an individual exhibit any such symptoms, they should follow NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation with immediate effect.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



TRAVELLING TO TRAINING OR MATCHES

<p>Clubs should encourage participants and parents to follow best practice for travel to and from venues, where possible walking or cycling should be used as an alternative mode of transport and the use of public transport should be kept to a minimum.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>People from a household or support bubble can travel together in a vehicle.</p> <p>Wider car sharing/pooling should be limited and follow the Government's safer travel guidance when it cannot be avoided, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All passengers should wash their hands (for at least 20 seconds) or sanitise their hands before entering and after exiting the vehicle. ■ Sharing transport with the same people each time. ■ Opening windows for ventilation. ■ Passengers facing away from each other. ■ Traveling side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow. ■ Consider seating arrangements to maximise distance between people in the vehicle. ■ Cleaning the car between journeys using standard cleaning products – cleaning the door handles and other areas that people may touch. ■ Ask the driver and passengers to wear a face covering. ■ Limiting the time spent at garages, petrol stations and motorway services. Passengers should wash their hands (for at least 20 seconds) or sanitise before re-entering the vehicle. 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

DURING RUGBY ACTIVITY



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SUMMARY

ACTION	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
All activity should take place outdoors.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sessions should have regular breaks at a maximum of 15 minutes to ensure the ball and equipment can be cleaned and sanitised.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Players and coaches should remain socially distanced during breaks.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total durations for training sessions must not exceed: 60 minutes for Under 7 & Under 8 and 75 minutes for Under 9 and above.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Everyone should refrain from touching their faces.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



DURING BREAKS

Anyone involved in rugby activity should maintain social distancing during all breaks in activity and post activity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Players are advised to bring their own water bottles and towels that are clearly identified and stored away from others. Sharing of water bottles towels or clothing should always be avoided.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



USE OF EQUIPMENT

ACTION	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
Equipment sharing should be minimised with only essential equipment shared at appropriate stages of return to play.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Where possible, use temporary line markings to mark out pitches during this period to reduce the need for cones.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cones should be put out and collected by the same person on each pitch; preferably by the coach.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Where possible, players should arrive in washed kit and take it home to wash.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
If players need to wear bibs / vests for the activity, they should be allocated to a player at the start of the activity. Bibs / vests must NOT be shared between players during the activity. If the bibs / vests require collecting at the end of the activity, the person collecting the bibs/ vests must wash and sanitise their hands after doing so.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
All bibs / vests must be cleaned after each use.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pitch checks should be carried out by the coaches before the activity takes place including any goal post protectors.		✓						
Goal post protectors should be cleaned after each activity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Team water bottles should NOT be provided.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strapping or tape should NOT be shared.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Any other equipment used should be cleaned after each individual use.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Where possible, more than one ball should be available for the activity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure the rugby ball is cleaned and sanitised before, during and after the activity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The following processes should be followed:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minimum of one bucket with clean water and soap. ■ Towels to dry the balls on both sides of the field. ■ Hand sanitiser for the person washing the balls. ■ If there is no natural stoppage after a maximum period of 15 minutes, the coach or match official should temporarily call time off whilst the ball is cleaned or changed for a clean one. 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

AGE GRADE RUGBY

AGE GRADE RUGBY

ACTION

Anyone coaching or officiating within Age Grade rugby should adhere to the [Age Grade Codes of Practice](#).

	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
Anyone coaching or officiating within Age Grade rugby should adhere to the Age Grade Codes of Practice .		✓		✓				



WHEN RUNNING ACTIVITY

Complete the [coach Covid-19 risk assessment](#) before activity.

Ensure the pitch area is correctly marked out and safe to use prior to activity with a minimum of half pitch per 20 player group.

Consider how to instruct, demonstrate, observe and feedback to players in a way that adheres to social distancing guidance.

Manage activity time so no periods of activity last more than 15 minutes without the ball being cleaned or changed for a clean one, and players cleaning and sanitising.

Design sessions that follow the current guidance and regulations.

Only use equipment relevant to the stage of the return to rugby roadmap for community activity.

Remind participants to maintain social distancing in the transition between activities or during rest periods.

Clean any equipment after each use.

Refrain from shouting where possible.

Complete the coach Covid-19 risk assessment before activity.		✓		✓				
Ensure the pitch area is correctly marked out and safe to use prior to activity with a minimum of half pitch per 20 player group.		✓		✓				
Consider how to instruct, demonstrate, observe and feedback to players in a way that adheres to social distancing guidance.		✓		✓				
Manage activity time so no periods of activity last more than 15 minutes without the ball being cleaned or changed for a clean one, and players cleaning and sanitising.		✓		✓				
Design sessions that follow the current guidance and regulations.		✓		✓				
Only use equipment relevant to the stage of the return to rugby roadmap for community activity.		✓		✓				
Remind participants to maintain social distancing in the transition between activities or during rest periods.		✓		✓				
Clean any equipment after each use.		✓		✓				
Refrain from shouting where possible.		✓		✓				



WHEN OFFICIATING

Carry out any coin toss themselves.

Carry only essential kit checks such as studs.

Maintain social distancing if sanctioning is required.

Consider using hand signals more to reduce the need to clarify any decisions.

Refrain from shouting where possible.

Whistles should not be shared.

Carry out any coin toss themselves.				✓				
Carry only essential kit checks such as studs.				✓				
Maintain social distancing if sanctioning is required.				✓				
Consider using hand signals more to reduce the need to clarify any decisions.				✓				
Refrain from shouting where possible.				✓				
Whistles should not be shared.				✓				

INJURY TREATMENT



ACTION

As with normal practice, first aiders should only carry out first aid treatment that they have been trained to do. Clubs should ensure first aid provision continues to be in place and ensure that all first aiders are made aware of the updated guidance on first aid treatment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional guidance on safe first aid practice, including the use of equipment, PPE and performing specific treatment can be [found here](#).

	Players	Coaches	Club Officials	Match Officials	Volunteers	First Aiders	Parents	Spectators
						✓		



GENERAL

Parents/carers are permitted to observe a session at a distance from a safeguarding perspective but should observe social distancing guidelines.

Supporters, parents, and other spectators to remain socially distanced whilst attending events.

Numbers must comply with Government guidelines and the space available identified through the risk assessment.

								✓
								✓
								✓

SESSION DESIGN



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SESSION DESIGN -

ALL SESSIONS SHOULD CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

INJURY PREVENTION (SMALL GROUPS SOCIALLY DISTANCED)

Use of the specific ACTIVATE injury prevention programme designed to comply with social distancing guidelines: [Ages 7-13](#) & [Ages 14+](#)

PREPARATION (SMALL GROUPS SOCIALLY DISTANCED)

- Players introduced to a pulse raising warm up before main activity starts that involves twisting, turning, starting and stopping. Dynamic stretching of muscles should also be integrated into this section.
- Passing of a clean sanitised ball between small groups of players who are socially distanced.
- This activity must be non-contact and should comply with social distancing.

GAME ZONE/ SKILL ZONE

- The guidance for each stage outlines the maximum permitted activity for sessions against the stage on the return to rugby roadmap. Coaches can choose to run any activity from previous stages if they wish but must not exceed guidance for the current stage.
- Maximum 15-minute continuous activity at any one time.
- Equipment sharing should be kept to a minimum.
- Players should remain socially distanced during breaks and after a score.
- Team huddles should be avoided.
- Spitting and chewing gum should be avoided by all.

CONCLUSION (SMALL GROUPS SOCIALLY DISTANCED)

- Players should cool down by reducing their heart rate via a slow jog/walk with some static stretching.
- All players, coaches and match officials should be socially distanced throughout this.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT DURING ACTIVITY:

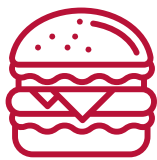
Webinar with registration and certificated completion for coaches, match officials and medics for each stage on the return to rugby roadmap. [Stage B](#) [Stage C](#) [Stage D](#)

Infographic outlining do's and don'ts for [coaches](#), [players](#), [match officials](#) and [first aiders](#).

AFTER RUGBY ACTIVITY



HOSTING AFTER ACTIVITY



ACTION

The [RFU reopening facilities guidance](#) provides information on measures and procedures that clubs should have in place for hosting any after activity requirements for participants and others at the venue. This includes the use of hospitality facilities for post-game socialising including bars, cellars and kitchens.

Players						
Coaches						
Club Officials		✓				
Match Officials						
Volunteers						
First Aiders						
Parents						
Spectators						



USEFUL LINKS

HERE ARE SOME USEFUL LINKS THAT SUPPORT THIS GUIDANCE

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

- [Covid-19 outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#)
- [NHS Test and Trace Programme](#)
- [Guidance on social distancing](#)
- [COVID-19 Symptoms](#)
- [Self-Isolation/ Stay at Home Guidance](#)
- [Guidance on the phased return of sport and recreation](#)

RFU INFORMATION

- [RFU Coronavirus Hub Homepage](#)
- [RFU Coronavirus Hub Resources](#)
- [Ready4Rugby](#)
- Webinars with registration and certificated completion for coaches, match officials and medics for each stage on the return to rugby road-map: [Stage B](#) [Stage C](#) [Stage D](#)
- [RFU Safeguarding](#)
- [RFU Age Grade Rugby](#)
- [Injury prevention with social distancing guidelines for ages 7-13](#)
- [Injury prevention with social distancing guidelines for ages 14+](#)



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